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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 003171

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, NSC FOR WALTON

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: THAILAND: HDC-FACILITATED DIALOGUE WITH SOUTHERN  
INSURGENTS -- MORE ON THE MALAYSIAN ANGLE

REF: A. BANGKOK 3104 (NAJIB VISIT)  
[1](#)B. CHIANG MAI 171 (TAMTHAI UPDATE)  
[1](#)C. BANGKOK 2096 (HDC DIALOGUE RESUMES)

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Classified By: A/DCM Robert Griffiths, reason 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: At the same time the Thai government hosted the visit of Malaysian PM Najib to southern Thailand December 9 (ref A), in what is generally seen as a positive step forward in both countries, southern separatist insurgents leaders based in Malaysia and involved in unpublicized secret negotiations facilitated by the Henri Dunant Centre (HDC) have been complaining about official Malaysian pressure and asked Royal Thai Government (RTG) representatives to "do something about it," HDC facilitator Michael Vatikiotis and ruling Democrat Party representative to the talks Kraisaak Choonhavan recently told us separately. Vatikiotis and Kraisaak traveled to Malaysia the first week in December in an attempt to engage aides to Najib, particularly Othman Razak, but it remains unclear whether Abhisit took the opportunity to raise the secret talks privately with Najib during Najib's December 8-9 visit to Thailand. End Summary.

More insider views about resumption of dialogue  
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[1](#)2. (S) Ref B offered the take of Mark Tamthai, the titular lead Thai representative in HDC-facilitated talks with separatist leaders from PULO and BRN-C, on the resumption of talks in Manila in November. HDC facilitator Michael Vatikiotis and ruling Democrat Party representative Kraisaak Choonhavan recently offered their own separate takes on the resumption of talks and the aftermath, elaborating in particular on the Malaysian angle that Tamthai had highlighted.

[1](#)3. (S) A key development occurred November 2, when Abhisit convened the first full session of the working group focused on the south, including Army Commander Anupong. Kraisaak used the session to challenge Anupong on a whole series of issues, from lack of fo|QlAIQQcv to agree that the HDC-facilitated talks could proceed, the meeting did not authorize inclusion of a military representative in the Thai delegation, as Vatikiotis had previously told us he hoped would happen (ref C).

¶4. (S) Kraissak and Vatikiotis separately told us that the PULO and BRN-C separatist leaders participating in the Manila talks in November were less concerned about the ongoing lack of accountability for the June 8 mosque massacre -- which they previously had said needed to be addressed if talks were to resume -- and much more focused on pressure they claimed the Malaysian authorities, specifically the external intelligence organization, which answers to the PM, were placing on them.

¶5. (S) Kraissak claimed the insurgents alleged that MEIO wanted to "take over" the two groups, placing individuals loyal to KL in charge. Vatikiotis elaborated further: factions within PULO and BRN-C loyal to MEIO had fared badly in recent elections within each organization, and MEIO subsequently placed additional pressure on Malaysia-based leaders, particularly harassing BRN-C. The insurgents demanded that the Thai team engage the Malaysian government directly, reveal the ongoing secret talks with the RTG facilitated by HDC, and demand that KL/MEIO back off in its pressure. Vatikiotis confirmed that he'd moved this latest round of talks from the usual Jakarta location to Manila in part to reduce potential Malaysian suspicions of any Indonesian role in the talks.

¶6. (S) Overall, Kraissak expressed satisfaction with the

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resumption of the talks in Manila, highlighting an insurgent offer to initiate a temporary cease fire of actions against state officials in two of three of the southernmost provinces. There was no way to cut all violence, he noted, while expressing regret that the movement's actual insurgent fighting units on the ground, usually referred to by the initials RKK (Runda Kumpulan Kecil), continued to opt out of participation in the process.

Secret trip to Malaysia, catty comment by Wirajuda  
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¶7. (S) To meet the insurgents' chief demand, Kraissak agreed in Manila to travel to Malaysia in advance of PM Najib's December 8-9 visit to Thailand to raise associated issues with a variety of Malaysian officials, both those close to Najib and opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim. Vatikiotis told us he had accompanied Kraissak to Malaysia and facilitated some meetings but had not participated in them. Kraissak had passed the message, but was told in turn to have Abhisit brief Najib in person if the Thai wanted the problem "fixed."

Kraissak subsequently briefed Abhisit on the Malaysian suggestion, and Abhisit then convened his top two southern experts on the NSC, NSC SecGen Thawin and Southern unit chief Somkiat Boonchoo, on the way forward, said Vatikiotis.

¶8. (S) Vatikiotis alleged that the Malaysians had persistently undermined efforts to resolve the conflict in the south, playing the spoiler's role. He suggested the local intel services treated the situation as a cash cow, justifying personnel and budgets; in addition to MEIO running a PULO cell and a BRN-C cell, they had supported Chavalit's "Nakorn Pattani" gambit via Hassan Thayob, a former BRN-C executive committee member. BRN-C leaders involved in the HDC-facilitated process felt uncomfortable, given Thayob's seniority. Others shared the same perspective, he claimed; former Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda recently told him after leaving office that KL did not want to see conflicts in the southern Philippines and southern Thailand resolved once and for all, because it kept Malaysia's neighbors distracted and off-balance.

JOHN